

## South Dakota National Guard Public Affairs Office

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**April 6, 2012**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **Sioux Falls Storm recognizes military**

By Staff Sgt. Rebecca Linder  
196th MEB Public Affairs

SIOUX FALLS, S.D – As a member of the United States military, it is the service member's duty to serve the citizens and community members throughout the nation. However, on April 1, the Sioux Falls Storm, part of the Indoor Football League, here, turned the tables to recognize military members as part of its military appreciation game.

The South Dakota Army National Guard, along with the Patriot Riders and the Lincoln High School Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, helped to make the game a memorable one to honor all those who have served and are currently serving in today's U.S. military forces.

"The hard work and teamwork of the local National Guard recruiters helping to put this event together is a true reflection upon how hard our military works as a whole," said Eric Van Beek, director of game day operations for the Sioux Falls Storm. "Sgt. 1st Class Rachel Hangman, a member of the Recruiting and Retention Battalion, was a very valuable assets to making these events take place and couldn't have happened without her."

Newly enlisted Soldiers lining the field to make a tunnel for the Storm football players was just the start of the breathtaking moments that were about to happen throughout the game. As a 30x60-foot American flag drops from the ceiling, Sgt. 1st Class Nick Cusenbary and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Shane Toupal repel from the arena's catwalk to escort the flag just before Sarah Gates, a deployed service member's wife, sings the national anthem.

"It makes me feel so proud to be a part of something bigger than myself," said Karter Lingen, a Soldier with the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade who helped line the field.

Courtney Larson, also a member of the 196th, said, "It was an honor and privilege to see all of our hard work recognized."

A moment of silence for those who have lost their lives as a service member and having all past and present military members stand to be recognized were also part of the opening ceremonies.

“Having the community support us in what we do means a lot to me and my family as well,” said Sgt. Greg Schut, 147th Field Artillery. “All the events here today reminded me of why I do what I do and why I wear the uniform.”

During the halftime show, drill-team members from the Lincoln High School JROTC put on a performance that led to a standing ovation.

With more than 50 service members partaking in the game’s events, military members were recognized and thanked in more ways than one for their service to this country.

“I could not be more thankful for each and every person that I have gotten to know in the military, and what happened on Sunday was a perfect example of the pride that I feel for those people and my country,” said Gates, wife of Staff Sgt. Trevor Gates, who is currently deployed to Afghanistan with the 200th Engineer Company. “I could not be more proud of what my husband does and the fact that I get to be a part of it means the world to me.”

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**120401-A-5816L-001:** Newly enlisted soldiers of the South Dakota Army National Guard Recruit Sustainment Program make a tunnel for players of the Sioux Falls Storm to come out of during the Storm’s military appreciation game in Sioux Falls, S.D. on April 1, 2012. The game was filled with memorable events to honor all past and present service members. (SDNG photo by Staff Sgt. Rebecca Linder) (RELEASED)



**120401-A-5816L-002:** Chief Warrant Officer 2 Shane Toupal, South Dakota National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion, repels from the catwalk of the Sioux Falls arena during the Sioux Falls Storm military appreciation game on April 1, 2012. The game was filled with memorable events such as this to honor all past and present service members. (SDNG photo by Staff Sgt. Rebecca Linder) (RELEASED)



**120401-A-5816L-003:** Members of the Lincoln High School Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps drill team performed during the half time show at the Sioux Falls Storm military appreciation game at the arena on April 1, 2012. This performance led to a standing ovation and was one of many breathtaking moments for the crowd during the game. (SDNG photo by Staff Sgt. Rebecca Linder) (RELEASED)